

October 2, 2023

Honorable Trevor Squirrel, Chair
Legislative Committee on Administrative Rules (LCAR)
115 State Street
Montpelier, VT 05633

Dear Chair Squirrel and Members of the Vermont LCAR:

**RE: Act No. 159, An act relating to best management practices (BMPs) for trapping
Act No. 165, An act relating to hunting coyotes with dogs**

Thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony. I am a resident of the town of Corinth in Orange County. Imagine this: You're out for a walk with your dog on a trail that you and your neighbors use regularly. Your dog, legally off-leash, wanders off trail and she does not respond as she usually does to your call. You watch her and then she gives a yelp. She has gotten trapped in a body-gripping trap. Her neck is crushed, not 'gripped.' She dies ten minutes later in your arms. My dog, Clara, was killed this way last December close to my home and this could happen to anyone virtually anywhere in the state.

The experience with my dog points to four problems that are analogous to Acts 159 and 165:

1. **Body-gripping kill traps.** Act 159 states that a baited trap would continue to be allowed if installed inside an enclosure. An enclosure does not stop the indiscriminate killing of wild animals and pets. These traps are non-selective and many animals are mistakenly killed by them every year. Even if the animal is not killed, it likely needs to be euthanized because a leg, face, or other body part has been crushed. *Body-gripping traps should be illegal in Vermont as they are in other states.*
2. **Control of dogs and Act 165.** I have been called out more than once by the trapping community that my dog's death was my fault because she was not leashed. This is misplaced blame. Corinth, like so many other Vermont towns, has a verbal command law, not a leash law. So here is the trapping community arguing that people should keep their dogs leashed at all times to be safe from their traps. Yet, concurrently, hunting hounds are often miles away from their owner and are not in control. There have been numerous incidents of hounds attacking people and entering private property.¹ *GPS collars should not be relied on for control of hounds, as stated in Act 165.*
3. **Public trail setbacks.** The 50-foot setback from public trails that Fish & Wildlife proposes falls way short of meaningful protection for the public. Some states require a 500-foot setback. My dog was killed about 70 feet from the trail. It is disturbing to think that the safety of hikers is compromised for the sake of about 350 trappers in our state. *Extending the proposed setback needs to be considered.*
4. **Public safety.** The use of signage in trapping areas has been considered, but not adopted. I am speaking not only of permanent signs on trail kiosks, but also refer to temporary signage to be placed by every trapper with name and date that reads: "Caution: Trapping is in Progress." Currently, traps can be set in all state parks, Wildlife Management Areas, town forests, on private land, and along public trails

with no caution signs for the public. Traps are a hazard and it's the responsibility of Fish & Wildlife to require that trappers use signage. *Adopting a signage rule needs to be considered.*

Thank you again for the opportunity to offer testimony in regards to body-gripping traps, control of hound-hunting dogs, public trail setbacks, and signage for the safety of the general public.

Yours sincerely,

Anne McKinsey

¹ *Addison Independent*, Nov. 14, 2019: <https://www.addisonindependent.com/2019/11/14/legislators-eye-bear-hound-rules-after-ripton-attack/>



Clara McKinsey killed in a body-gripping trap (aka Conibear or body-crushing trap).
December 2022. Corinth, Vermont.